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GATEWAY TO IMPERIAL COUNTY

MOVING ON UP

Southwest mock trial team gets ready to compete at state level

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If it weren't for Mitch Driskill, young Benjamin Tyler wouldn't have been involved in mock trial competition at Southwest High School.

Tyler, a 17-year-old senior, credits having the attorney as a neighbor and family friend whose influence led Tyler to try his hand in mock trial.

"It's been a great experience for me," said Tyler, who plans to major in psychology in college. "It's been my favorite thing during my whole high school experience."

For Tyler the decision to be one of Southwest High's aspiring legal eagles paid off this week when the team scored big during the annual Imperial County Mock Trial Competition.

The team is going on to compete in Riverside next month on the state level with 30 to 35 other schools.



Rep. Bob Filner, D-Chula Vista, presents a certificate Friday to Southwest High mock trial team member Cassidy Alford. JOSELITO VILLERO PHOTO

On Friday, U.S. Rep. Bob Filner, D-Chula Vista, congratulated the students for their efforts and presented certificates to them during an appearance at Southwest High.

As an expert witness during the mock trial competition at the county level, Hojin Jeon, a 16-year-old junior, said he valued his participation in the event.

Public speaking was

not his forte in the past, Hojin said. Now, he can handle it a little better, he said.

"I think I'm little bit confident with this now," Hojin said.

Kailin McFadden, a 16-year-old sophomore, was inspired to join mock trial competitions through her sister, who she said had done it for three years. This is Kailin's first year participating in the scholastic event.

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**"It's been a great experience for me.
It's been my favorite thing during my
whole high school experience."**

— BENJAMIN TYLER, 17, who plans to major in
psychology in college

"I'm lucky I got to
learn how to do that
with this," Kailin said.

Equally appreciative
was 17-year-old senior
Ariana Moreno-Drew,
who spent untold hours
in preparing herself to
deal with all the legal
details connected to the
cases of cyber bullying
and an assault with a
brick.

What's significant is
that Ariana did this

while caring for her 11-
month-old son, Oliver,
whom everyone on the
team doted on during
the many weeks of
preparation for the
county-wide competi-
tion, teammates said.

Ariana hopes Oliver
will catch the legal bug
the way she did when
she was exposed to
mock trials at age 10,
she said.

"It's a lifestyle thing,"
Ariana said.